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FM AMEMBASSY COLOMBO
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 9679
INFO AMEMBASSY ATHENS
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AMEMBASSY LONDON
AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI
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SECDEF WASHDC
CDRUSARPAC FT SHAFTER HI//APCW/APOP//
CDR USPACOM HONOLULU HI//J3/J332/J52//

UNCLAS COLOMBO 000357

SENSITIVE

STATE FOR SCA (BOUCHER, CAMP), SCA/INS AND PRM
STATE ALSO PASS USAID
AID/W FOR ANE/SCA, DCHA/FFP (DWORKEN, KSHEIN)
AID/W FOR DCHA/OFDA (MORRISP, ACONVERY, RTHAYER, RKERR)
ATHENS FOR PCARTER
BANGKOK FOR USAID/DCHA/OFDA (WBERGER)
KATHMANDU FOR USAID/DCHA/OFDA AND POL (SBERRY)
GENEVA FOR RMA (NKYLOH, NHILGERT, MPITOTTI)
USUN NEW YORK FOR ECOSOC (D MERCADO)
SECDEF FOR OSD - POLICY
PACOM ALSO FOR J-5

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [PREF](#) [MOPS](#) [PHUM](#) [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [ASEC](#) [CE](#)
SUBJECT: Northern Sri Lanka SitRep 42

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¶1. (SBU) SUMMARY: The Foreign Minister announced the GSL would suspend attacks against the LTTE for a short period of time. He did not indicate when the suspension would begin. 1000MT of food and non-food items are set to be delivered to the safe zone on March 31. Basil Rajapaksa outlined steps the GSL planned to take to address overcrowding in IDP camps. Rajapaksa also pledged to turn over GSL lists of camp inhabitants to the ICRC and UNHCR. The ICRC continues to face delays securing visas for its staff. DCM turned over five emergency kits with medicine and supplies for 50,000 persons to the Minister of Health today (March 30). End Summary.

Foreign Minister: GSL will suspend attacks

¶2. (U) Media reports quoted Foreign Minister Bogollagama on March 30 declaring that the government had decided to "suspend attacks against the LTTE for a short period of time to provide humanitarian relief aid to civilians in the safe zone and to open several safe passages for them to move into state-administered areas." Bogollagama did not indicate when such a suspension would begin, but we presume it is to pressure the LTTE to agree. On March 29 the Sunday Times lead story quoted Defence Spokesman Keheliya Rambukwella stating "we are ready for this 'humanitarian pause' as suggested by the United Nations Security Council... if it will pave the way to rescue civilians used as human shields by the LTTE."

1000MT of Food To Go In March 31

13. (U) The Commissioner General of Essential Services confirmed during the monthly Coordinating Committee for Humanitarian Assistance (CCHA) meeting that the "Dublin" cargo ship would deliver 1000 MT of food, including vegetables, to the "safe zone" on March 31. UNHCR emergency kits containing clothing (4000 pieces), bed sheets (2000), shelter material (2000 sheets, 2000 mats) as well as hygiene kits (1000) will be included in the shipment. A full readout of the CCHA meeting will be reported septel.

Basil Pledges Efforts to Relieve Overcrowding

14. (SBU) At the CCHA meeting Ambassador highlighted the continuing problem of overcrowding in the IDP camps and the need to resettle IDPs quickly and urged the government to clear new land where additional camps could be established. Senior Presidential Advisor Basil Rajapaksa reported that local NGOs would shortly be building additional shelters for up to 500 families in the IDP camps and reported that GSL officials, local NGOs and the U.N. would be meeting on the evening of March 30 to agree on a wider plan to accommodate the possible influx of IDPs from the safe zone. Rajapaksa also re-committed the government to resettling IDPs in Mannar, specifically up to 5,500 IDPs from the Mussali area by the end of April. (Note: It is unclear at this point whether demining NGOs will grant a required low-risk certificate for the area to the

U.N. before the April deadline.) GSL officials reported that they were exploring new locations to house IDPs in Mannar as well as Trincomalee district, north of the former forward defense lines.

GSL Commits to Turnover IDP Lists to ICRC and UNHCR

15. (SBU) Ambassador also raised the military's heavy presence in the camps and continuing reports of disappearances affecting the IDP population. Ambassador pointed out to Rajapaksa that the GSL had authoritative lists of camp residents that they could turn over to the ICRC and UNHCR to help verify the extent of the problem. Rajapaksa agreed to share the list with the UN and ICRC to improve transparency.

No Progress on ICRC Visas

16. (SBU) The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) has not received MFA clearance for 35 pending visas for staff to provide short-term surge capacity as well as regular replacements. Ambassador earlier raised the issue with the Foreign Minister (ref H) on March 18. ICRC head Paul Castella reported that during a discussion with Basil Rajapaksa on March 27 Rajapaksa insisted that MFA has responsibility for issuing the visas. Ambassador again raised the issue with the Foreign Minister on March 28 who promised to look into the matter. Castellaplans to meet Bogollagama early this week.

U.S. Donates Primary Care Medicine and Supplies for Treatment of IDPs

17. (U) Five emergency health kits containing medicine and supplies that can provide primary treatment for 50,000 persons for three months were turned over today to Minister of Health Nimal Siripala de Silva by DCM. The medicine and supplies will be used by hospitals in the North that have been strained by new IDP caseloads. USAID's Office of Foreign Disaster Assistance (OFDA) provided \$77,000 for the kits (some of the contents are donated by NGOs), transportation, and end use monitoring. The donation was facilitated by U.S. NGO Medical Teams International (MTI). The donation followed a request from the Minister of Health when the Ambassador recently presented one emergency health kit that had been funded by MTI.

504 Hardcore Cadres Sent to Rehabilitation

18. (SBU) The Sinhalese language newspaper Rivira reported that 504

"hardcore (LTTE) cadres" had been identified among the tens of thousands of escapees from Tiger-held territory and "had been sent for rehabilitation." Post is attempting to determine their whereabouts and whether ICRC has been granted access to the suspected cadres to ensure their humane treatment while in GSL custody.

Nationalist Politician Attacks Norway

and U/SYG Holmes; Ambassador Responds

¶9. (U) Reports of U/SYG Holmes' contact with LTTE's diplomatic point person Kumaran Padmanadan (KP) set off a firestorm in the nationalist press. National Freedom Front leader and President Rajapaksa's political ally Wimal Weerawansa demanded that the government sever ties with Norway over their purported role facilitating the contact. To correct widespread misperceptions about the nature of the UN-LTTE communication, Ambassador posted a comment on a widely-read newspaper website: "Conversations such as the telephone conversation between UN Humanitarian Chief Sir John Holmes and KP referred to by Mr. Weerawansa were solely for the purpose of persuading the LTTE to allow civilians to leave and observe international humanitarian law. The conversations in no way constitute an endorsement of the terrorist activities of the LTTE."

Gov't Claims Sea Tiger Casualties

¶10. (SBU) The Navy claimed that at least 25 Sea Tigers and a sailor were killed and 3 more sailors injured in sea battle off Mullaitivu on March 30. The news report also stated that 4 LTTE boats were destroyed. (Note: the account from military sources appears one-sided. So far, the TamilNet website has carried no news of the encounter.)

Civilian Casualties and IDP Outflow

¶11. (SBU) Sources from within the LTTE-controlled area report 161 civilians were killed and 214 injured on March 27-29. These sources report 350 arrivals into overnment-controlled territory on March 29. (Not: Such reports from Tamil sources cannot be confired and are frequently exaggerated.)

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